

Interview with Raymond Felle, Vietnam hospital corpsman assigned to Co. K, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. Interviewed by Jan K. Herman, Historian, Navy Medical Department, 23, 24 November 2004.

Where are you from?

I was born in California on June 24th, 1947 and grew up in Molalla, Oregon. I graduated from high school there and then attempted to join the Navy in Portland but all their billets were full. So I joined the Navy in California in June of '66.

Had you wanted to be a corpsman?

No. I wanted to be on a ship because I knew things were heating up in Vietnam and that's why I joined the Navy. When I went to the induction center in Los Angeles they told me they could guarantee me corps school. After corps school, I could apply for x-ray school. There was no mention of the Marine Corps. I went to corps school in San Diego and I was there from October '66 to January '67.

Where did you go after corps school?

From corps school, they sent me to Field Medical Service School at Camp Pendleton.

Were you surprised?

Yes. I began figuring all this out about half way through corps school that they had plans for us.

And they weren't plans about getting on a ship.

No. In fact, I never was on a ship.

What do you remember about the Field Medical Service School experience?

We could wear the Marine uniform but we had to buy it. So I bought a set of Marine uniforms I could wear around. I was pretty proud that I could wear two different uniforms--what ever met the occasion.

We spent time on field training. Each day there was something different to do. One day was firing the rifle. The next day it would be applying different types of battle dressings. We learned to treat casualties, what trip wires were--things we might encounter in Vietnam.

Were the instructors people who had already been there?

I don't remember. I imagine some had already been to Vietnam.

So you were learning to use weapons such as the M14 at that time.

Yes. It was the M14.

And the .45 pistol?

They may have showed it to us but we never spent any time with the .45, even though that was the gun I used in Vietnam.

Then you already knew you were going to Vietnam in Field Medical Service School?

After Field Medical Service School, I had a duty station at San Diego at Balboa. So I worked there from February or March of '67 to November of '67. During that time, I knew they

were sending many of the corpsmen to Vietnam, especially the ones who had already been to Field Medical Service School. So I had a really good idea that that's where I was going. Then I found out in October of '67 that I was getting orders to Vietnam.

Were you to report to a unit over there?

I was given my orders and then went on a month's leave in November. There were two other corpsmen I had been in corps school with--Jerry Porter and Dan Grinage. I went back East to visit Dan, and then we were going to drive down to pick up Jerry and spend some time traveling around the U.S. I went back East, picked up Dan and then we drove to pick up Jerry in Union City, TN, but he couldn't go because he had just gotten engaged. So Dan and I traveled around a bit.

After that time was up, all of us reported at Travis Air Force Base outside San Francisco. We were there about December 11th or 12th of '67.

Had you been assigned to a unit so you knew where you were going to report once you got to Vietnam?

No. I had no idea who I was going to be assigned with. We took a flight, refueled in Hawaii, and then landed in Okinawa. All this was on a private commercial airline. It was a Braniff charter.

How long were you in Okinawa?

We had our sea bags with us. We stored them in Okinawa and stayed there about a week at Camp Hansen. That was the first time I saw people coming back from Vietnam. They were really dirty. They had that faraway look. I wondered what was going to be happening from this point forward. I was uneasy.

Did you fly from there to Danang?

Yes. We took another Braniff plane from Okinawa to Danang.

I've talked to other people about their introduction to Vietnam when they landed at Danang. Do you have any recollections.

I was so taken aback by the whole thing. I was scared and don't think I was recording information the first couple of days. I don't even remember landing at the airport. I remember sitting there and thinking, "God, I'm here! Am I going to be okay?"

I must have only spent a day in Danang and then I went to Phu Bai via a C-130 transport. I don't remember that landing either.

I was told to report to the battalion aid station in Phu Bai. All this time Jerry and Dan were with me. Jerry and I were given orders to the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. Dan had to go to 2/26, Golf Company. They were at Khe Sanh at that time. So Jerry and I got on a plane and flew back to Dong Ha, and from there we caught a helicopter or a truck and went to Camp Carroll. That's where I met up with 3/9.

Wasn't that an artillery base?

That's correct. It was named after a Captain Carroll, I believe, who was killed a year before.

You weren't the only corpsmen there?

There were two of us. Jerry and I were the only two corpsmen reporting in for the battalion. We joined the company about the 22nd of December '67. I was assigned to 1st Platoon to replace a corpsman who was rotating back. He had been with them for 6 months in the field. I never got to meet him because he was gone by the time I got there.

You said earlier that you weren't recording a lot of information. I'll bet you were beginning to do some serious recording about then.

Yes. By then, I had started recording information.

What do you recall about reporting in to Camp Carroll?

I remember the smell, the heat. I remember looking at the mountains around us and thinking, "Am I gonna make it here? Did I make the right decision?" My dad died while I was in boot camp and I was the only surviving son. So my mom didn't want me to go to Vietnam. She told me that being the only surviving son, I didn't have to go. But I told her it was my duty to go. So I'm thinking about that decision. Did I really make a wise decision coming to this country and being with the Marines. I'm proud to be with them but I don't know a hell of a lot about them. I don't know how to survive. I'm a Navy corpsman, not a Marine. At least not yet.

But you had aspirations to be as good as any other Marine.

That was my aspiration.

But you didn't know how you were going to measure up against their standards.

I did not know how I was going to do that.

So, they gave me all my gear and my Unit 1 and I became familiar with what was in the Unit 1. From that point forward, they started looking at me as the person who would treat and take care of them.

Just as an aside, do you remember what was in the Unit 1 at that time?

I had hemostats and maybe six syrettes of atropine. They were in kind of a metal tube with the needle on the end of it. You'd poke a hole in the middle of the needle and run a stilette down it. Then you'd squeeze the tube at the bottom after you put it into a person's leg.

These were morphine syrettes?

No. Atropine. They looked just like morphine syrettes. So I had six atropine in case we had a gas attack. Then I had 10 morphine syrettes. I had many small battle dressings, a few larger battle dressings, and one really large one for a gut wound. There were a lot of ace wraps, tape, Band-Aids, Bacitracin. I also had halazone tablets for treating water supplies. A couple of weeks into the thing, I got a gallon-size container that had chlorine granules in it they used for treating water in the water buffaloes. I got rid of the halazone tablets and replaced them with these granules of chlorine. I hated the taste of the halazone which tasted just like iodine.

Now you had all your gear. I'll bet by this time someone had given you a .45.

Yes. I got a .45. Before I went in the service, I was familiar with shooting guns. I had spent many hours hunting so I knew how to shoot rifles and pistols. I just wasn't familiar with the automatic. The pistol they gave me was pretty beat up. It was probably from World War II.

The barrel in it was loose. And I couldn't hit something 15 feet away. It made a lot of noise but it just wasn't very accurate. It probably came from the previous corpsman and the one before him and the one before him.

When I was in battle, I usually had an M16 to take with me. I'd get a rifle from the people I was treating. They'd either be wounded or killed and I'd just take their rifle. Since I wasn't responsible for it so I could lay it down to use both hands. If I lost it, I could always get another one.

What happened next?

We got on a truck convoy on the 24th of December and got back onto Route 9. It pretty much followed the McNamara Line of combat bases.

You were then going west on Route 9.

Yes. We finally ended up at the Rock Pile. And that was pretty impressive. It was a huge pile of rocks with clouds and fog layers hovering over the top. It was just mystical. You knew the enemy was out there somewhere. I had an eerie feeling and certainly didn't feel secure.

There were several projections of rocks that stick out. I went back to Vietnam to visit my battlefields last year and they've started to take part of the Rock Pile apart using the rocks for road construction.

Anyway, once we got to the Rock Pile, I pulled into the BAS there and checked in with my battalion surgeon, who was my boss, Jerry Behrens. He took my name and asked me what I needed. I asked him where I was going. He wasn't sure. We had Christmas dinner there at the Rock Pile.

Where did you go from there?

At the Rock Pile, Route 9 starts heading south. We headed down Route 9, which was a dirt road. It was in the middle of a valley with high ridges and jungle on both sides. And you couldn't see the top of the ridge because of cloud cover during the monsoon season. We went to a place called Calu. The bunkers there were built by the 11th Engineer Battalion out of 6 x 12 lumber and they didn't have any sandbags on them yet. Immediately, that's what we started to do--fill sandbags--to protect the bunkers where we would be living for 3 months. We were about 16 or 20 kilometers east of Khe Sanh.

This is March of '68, and the siege of Khe Sanh was already on.

Yes. I got to Calu on December 26th, 1967. The siege of Khe Sanh started in January.

What was going on at Calu at that time?

Almost everybody was new to the area which was all jungle and surrounding hills. There's a river that comes down from Khe Sanh to Calu--the Quang Tri River. We ran day patrols out of Calu and night ambush patrols.

On the 14th of February we made first contact with the enemy. We had 10 Marines and 1 corpsman killed. I was wounded.

What happened?

Five days prior to this, we had gone out on a day patrol up Route 9 towards Khe Sanh. The siege was going on. Lang Vei had been overrun by tanks. It was the first use of tanks in the Vietnam War. All the bridges were blown between Khe Sanh and Calu so they couldn't get a tank down it. So we were pretty much protected that way.

These were NVA tanks?

Yes. Eleven Soviet made PT-76 amphibious tanks driven by the NVA overran the US Army Special Forces camp at Lang Vei on 7 February 1968.

What was the incident in which you were wounded?

We went out on a 2-day patrol. We left early in the morning and moved up about 2 miles west of Calu towards Khe Sanh. The point people saw an NVA run up on a hill. We started up the hill after him. There was our whole company--three platoons and a command group. The hills run north and south. It's called Valentine's Ridge, about 2 miles outside of Calu towards Khe Sanh. We circled it and were west of the ridge. We were going to go up on top of the ridge to get these NVA we had seen running up there. Actually, it was a trap. We had three platoons heading up the side of the hill and they opened up on the second platoon with .50 caliber machine guns. The NVA fired an RPG at a rock which blew the rock apart and threw shrapnel and rock fragments which wounded me and four other men to my side and front, and very seriously wounded one of the Marines in front of me. It blew half of his rear end off. Then they started lobbing in mortars. We lost contact with the command group which had CAPT Ward, our commanding officer, and LT Reese, our executive officer. Early in the battle, a mortar had landed and had critically wounded CAPT Ward and LT Reese. They both died a short time after that. The battalion corpsman, HM2 [Larry J.] Goss was also killed by that mortar round.

So the battle raged on and we took out the RPG nest. We couldn't contact the rest of the company so my platoon commander, LT Holladay, took what was left of our platoon and the wounded and we went over the top of the hill and waited for commands from Calu. Before we went over the top of the hill, he had called in jets, and they dropped napalm and 500-pounders on the enemy. They were dropping the 500-pounders so close to us that we were told to set off green smoke so they would know where we were. Those explosions would literally lift you off the ground when they hit. I could only imagine what they did to the NVA.

Were they pretty accurate with the bombs?

I think so. They didn't hit us and we were in the middle of a triple-canopy jungle. I just remember the big shards from the bombs cutting off the tops of trees, and pieces of those trees falling down all over the place.

We got off the hill that evening and waited on Route 9 for more reinforcements, which came up at 2 o'clock the next morning. Then we took our wounded and went back to Calu. The rest of 3rd Platoon was still up on that hill and India Company 3/9 went up to assist them and bring them down. The final tally was 10 Marines and 1 corpsman killed.

How badly injured were you?

I didn't even know I was injured, I was so scared. I had a perforated left eardrum, shrapnel in my neck, back, and the side of my arm where it wasn't protected by my flak jacket.

This all happened when the RPG went off?

I think so. I'm assuming that it did. I just didn't know I was wounded. I had blood all over me from treating people.

What were you able to do for the wounded on the scene?

I gave them morphine, and was able to control the bleeding with large battle dressings and give moral support; that's all I could do in the field. I had serum albumin but it was kind of useless. It's hard to start an IV when you can't see the person's arm in the dark. Many times the people you're dealing with are dehydrated anyway. Serum albumin is a volume expander and when you inject it, it sucks fluid out of the person's tissue to expand the fluid volume. If the person is bleeding severely, they're already dehydrated so you're not going to do them a lot of good. In the field, I could do better by just controlling the bleeding rather than trying to start a useless IV.

Then at 2 o'clock in the morning they told us to start heading back down to Route 9. That was 1st and 2nd Platoon. We were meeting up with stragglers coming in out of the jungle. It was dark and they couldn't see. We just coaxed them in by radio, telling them which way to go.

This was the first battle many of us had been in so we were pretty shook up. I was pretty scared but I did my job. I did what I had to do and earned the respect of my platoon.

Now you were a full-fledged Marine.

I was no longer "Squid." I was Doc.

How were you treated for your wounds?

I was treated by Dr. Jerry Behrens. He was called into the battalion aid station to treat the wounded coming in on the 15th from the Rock Pile.

So the battalion aid station was back at Camp Carroll?

We had a battalion aid station at each one of the combat bases. So this was at Calu. I remember going to the BAS with a Marine named Gause. He was wounded also. I told Dr. Behrens about the blood coming out of my ear and that I had shrapnel in my arms. He removed as much of the shrapnel as he could. I told Dr. Behrens what had happened and that I couldn't hear very well because of all the explosions.

That morning when I came into Calu, I had my 8mm camera with me and I took pictures of the jets dropping their bombs while part of the 3rd platoon was still up there. I still have those.

What happened after Dr. Behrens treated you?

I didn't know where Jerry Porter was. I knew he came out with us but I didn't know whether he was alive or dead. I was still functioning as a corpsman and helping Dr. Behrens treat men as they came in. We were running out of medical supplies and medevacing casualties out as quick as we could. Eighty percent of our company was wounded up there.

Did you know Goss, the corpsman who was killed?

Yes. I've been in contact with his daughter and let her know that I had pictures of him I took 5 days before he was killed. I wanted her to have them so she'd know what her dad looked

like. I told her what kind of man he was, as much as I knew. I had only known him a couple of months but that's a lot of time to get to know someone.

I guess you get pretty close to people in a situation like that?

You do.

Tell me about the battle in which you saved your platoon commander.

It was for this action that I was awarded the Bronze Star for saving the life of my platoon commander. This happened on March 27th. We had information that a tank had crossed the DMZ into South Vietnam so we set out on an operation to find it. We were near Camp Carroll and just starting to set in for the evening. I was digging my foxhole with my fighting hole buddy, CPL [Clifford Dan (Will)] Williams. I started to dig the hole and he went up to the command group with LT [Michael] Holladay, who was our platoon commander. They were going there to get information on what we were going to be doing the next day. As they were having that meeting, everybody else was digging their fighting holes. CPL Williams then came back from the meeting to help me dig the fighting hole. He took off all his gear and piled it in front of the hole so he could help dig. Just then, we heard the mortars leave the tubes. We heard, "Pop. Pop. Pop." And we knew they were on their way. So we yelled, "Incoming!"

My hole was only about half dug and both of us got into the hole. As he went out to grab his flak jacket to cover the hole, I grabbed him and pulled him back and put my flak jacket over both our heads. The first round landed about 3 feet in front of our hole and blew up all his gear and wounded the platoon commander who was running back to his hole.

About seven or eight more rounds fell. Then I heard "Corpsman up!" I could see someone was wounded. I ran to him and it was our platoon commander, LT Holladay. I called back to CPL Williams and he came up to help me treat him. The lieutenant was only a few feet from the mortar round when it went off. I could see that he had a neck wound, a face wound, and a large gash in his leg. He was spitting up foaming blood so I also thought he also had a sucking chest wound. Just as I took off his flak jacket, we heard more mortar rounds come out of the tubes. The two of us lay on top of LT Holladay to protect him from being injured any more.

It was getting really dark and I could hardly see. I patched up what I could and we called for a helicopter. It took about 20 minutes for it to get in. The lieutenant was bleeding profusely and I wasn't able to control it. A mortar fragment had taken out two teeth and part of his jaw. It had gone through his mouth and then through his neck partially severing his jugular vein. There was a 6-inch gash in his leg, and the mortar round had also busted his pelvis and broke his arm. I didn't know about those injuries at that time. I was only interested in stopping the bleeding as best I could.

The helicopter came in and then they mortared us again. As we tried to get him up into the helicopter, the pilot got jumpy and lifted it about 4 feet off the ground. CPL Williams and I couldn't lift the lieutenant that high. The pilot then lowered it a bit and we finally got him in and they took off. And that was the last I heard about him until I was looking for CPL Williams' son about 5 or 6 years ago. And I found LT Holladay.

It took him a year to recover. And while he was in Guam, he submitted medals for both CPL Williams and me. Will was listed as killed on May 1st of '68 but actually he was killed on the 30th of April.

You say you found LT Holladay?

Yes. I found him about 4 years ago. When we talked, he told me that's why he put us in for the medals. I said, "I never got any medal."

He said, "You didn't?"

And I said, "No."

So, he resubmitted all the paperwork and I had it issued to me in 2000 at a ceremony in Portland, OR.

Where does he live now?

He lives in Florida. He retired from the Marine Corps as a colonel. The Discovery Channel was looking for a corpsman who had found the person that they had treated in the field and so I submitted my story to them and they did a special on it in a program called "Real Mash." I hadn't seen him since the battlefield. After I put him on that helicopter, I never knew what his fate was. And then they brought us together on film.

What was that like to be reunited with your old platoon commander?

That was something. I could sort of recognize him but it was the voice. That's what I remembered the most. It was quite an emotional reunion.

I also found the son of my fighting hole buddy, CPL Williams, and presented him with information about his dad. COL Holladay and I went to Michigan--to Will's gravesite--and had a ceremony in which we presented the Silver Star he was awarded for his action in helping me take care of COL Holladay and taking over command of the platoon after Holladay was wounded.

You must feel pretty good to have learned that you saved the man's life.

Yes. But acts of heroism in the field were rarely recorded. Only in certain circumstances were they ever recorded, and many times the people who actually witnessed the events were killed themselves. And many more of those events either were written up and then were never submitted, as in my case, or the awards were never issued to the person, which is sad.

Where did you go after the incident with LT Holladay?

CPL Williams had taken over command of the 1st Platoon when LT Holladay was medevaced out. We were in the field 2 more days and then they choppered us back to the Rock Pile. That was about the 31st of March. I remember taking a bath with about six or seven of us in a creek that runs near the Rock Pile. All of us were stripped down in the water when the NVA fired six or seven rockets. Those 120mm rockets sound like a dragon from hell. They just scream at you. They stand as tall as you do and they're about as big around as a peanut butter jar. They were probably trying to get our 175mm guns.

Anyway, when they started coming in, we all jumped in a foxhole, which was designed for about two people and all of us were laying on top of each other in that foxhole all buck naked. It was kind of scary but we got some laughs out of it later. After I put my clothes back on, I went up to the BAS, where Dr. Jerry Behrens was to get more supplies.

While I was there, we heard an explosion not too far down from where we had been taking our bath. We thought it was incoming but found out it wasn't. They brought the casualty up to the BAS wrapped in a poncho. His name was [Sherman T.] Washington. He was in 1st Platoon. He had been taking a grenade out of a canister but the pin had fallen out. So the spoon

flew on it and he had only 4 or 5 seconds to figure out what to do with it. He couldn't throw it in front of him because there were more people out there taking a bath. He couldn't throw it in back of him because there was a 175mm gun there. So he stuck it under his flak jacket. It killed him. I have been trying to get more information about him so we can get him some kind of award for doing that. He took his own life instead of throwing that grenade and killing other people.

After that we went to OP Wyn, which is one of the hills that surround the Rock Pile. There was a commanding view of the Rock Pile and the Razorback, which is another monolith. We had a tank up there and a 106 recoilless rifle and a communication tower. All the communications came up from the main Rock Pile combat base through that tower and antenna.

We really had a nice view of the Razorback and the main Rock Pile so we could keep an eye on things going on around there. One evening we took incoming and were supposed to return fire with this 106 recoilless. One of the rounds hit the guy wire of the antenna and when it blew up, shrapnel went all through the communication trailer and just destroyed it.

We were up there when "Operation Pegasus" went by with all the helicopters carrying the 1st Air Cavalry to relieve Khe Sanh. We stayed up at the Rock Pile until the 30th of April. I was supposed to go on R&R to Bangkok but they canceled it because 1/9 was in heavy contact at Cam Vu, which is near Cam Lo. So they took the whole battalion, with the exception of India Company, and flew us in by helicopter on the 30th of April just outside of Cam Vu. We were on a road there about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

There was a young boy from a local village selling cookies and cans of Coke, each for a dollar. So I bought some cookies from him. I asked Will if he wanted some cookies. He said he didn't because they put glass in them and he didn't want any. So I ate them myself.

We then got the order to move out and as we did, immediately we started taking machine gun fire. I stayed as close as I could to CPL Williams as we moved across a creek. The shooting and the mortars and artillery started to increase in intensity. A mortar went off about 20 feet to my right close to a Marine. CPL Williams told me to go over and take care of that guy. He had most of his hand blown off and shrapnel throughout his body. He was having labored breathing.

During this whole thing there was artillery landing around us, and machine gun fire and mortars. There were three companies in contact with an unknown enemy force.

As I wrapped up the guy's hand, another Marine knelt next to me and asked if he could help. I told him to hold the man's head. As we knelt by his side, a round landed right in front of us. As I looked at this Marine, half his face disappeared. He continued looking at me. There was no blood there immediately after it happened. There was just raw flesh on the side of his face. He was looking at me as if to say, "What happened?"

He had a towel around his neck so I grabbed it and shoved it onto his face and told him to hold on to it while I'm trying to take care of this other guy. It was so chaotic. I got the first guy onto a poncho just as I noticed that the Marines who were firing in front of us began dropping back to a tree line. I was dragging the guy on the poncho and the other Marine was helping me while holding the towel against his face with blood starting to gush out.

We dragged the Marine back to the tree line, where everybody was starting to regroup. There were just masses of wounded lined up and others who were dead wrapped in ponchos. Then they mortared us in the tree line and men who were already wounded were re-wounded.

This went on for at least 2 hours until night came on and the fighting died down. The after action report of May 1st, 1968 for "Operation Kentucky" listed 31 KIA, 132 WIA who

were medevaced, and 25 WIA minor, and 2 MIA. The enemy lost 87 KIA confirmed, and 3 POWs.

Anyway, I took care of the people the best I could. There were traumatic amputations; there were limbs that were just raw meat. There were people with bullet holes through them. There was just blood squirting everywhere! I was just covered with blood.

At midnight we got the last of the medevacs out and I searched around to try and find my company again. I had no idea where everyone was nor did I know who the people were that I had been treating. I got back to the company and they told me they thought I was dead. I said, "Where's Will?" They said, he hadn't come back and they didn't know where he was. At first I thought I had medevaced him out but I would have seen him.

The next morning we found him. He had been shot in the neck. From that point forward, things changed a lot in the way I felt. My security was gone. I became more cautious in what I did and in answering to "Corpsman up!"

CPL Williams had been your protection.

I had met him on the 13th of January when India Company was bringing in our mail and supplies from the Rock Pile to Calu. The convoy was ambushed on Route 9 between the Rock Pile and Calu killing and wounding many Marines. One of the people on that convoy was CPL Williams. After the battle was over, he came into the bunker and reported to 1st LT Holladay at that time. He had shrapnel in his neck so I proceeded to remove it and apply iodine and Bacitracin. From that point on, we just kind of became locked on to helping and taking care of each other.

That was his first Purple Heart. His second was on March 27, 1968 when 1stLT Michael Holladay was gravely wounded. Williams had taken off his flak jacket and gear to help me dig our fighting hole for the evening. There was the sound of mortars leaving the tube and no time to retrieve his gear but he attempted to anyway. I pulled him back into the fighting hole and we used my flak jacket as cover over our heads. He had his hand on the top of the flak jacket holding it over his head and the first mortar round landed 3 feet in front of us and destroyed his gear, destroyed his rifle and LAW (Light Antitank Weapon), tore up his flak jacket, and wounded him in the hand. After that, he said, "You have to give me my third Purple Heart so I can get out of the field." I wasn't by his side when he was mortally wounded the third time. If I had been by his side on April 30, 1968, I don't know if I could have prevented him from dying, but at least I could have tried to save him. I will never be able to resolve that question in my mind. Williams had to have been within 30 feet of where I was treating another Marine.

That operation continued from April 30 to around May 7, 1968. We had tanks with us from Bravo, 3rd Tank Battalion stationed at Cam Lo. The morning of May 1, we continued to chase the NVA with more contact. I had the blood of a hundred Marines on me and no way to get it off. On about the 7th they let me go to R&R to Sydney, Australia.

It must have seemed like another world to you at that point.

It was just surreal. I was beginning to understand that blank look I had first seen on those Marines who were returning from Vietnam at Okinawa when I was on my way over.

I flew to Dong Ha, then to Danang, then caught a flight to Sydney. They put me up in a hotel there called Holy Cross with another Marine. We spent our time touring around. A family took us in and fed us dinner one night. I had kangaroo tail soup. I bought a camera there and took many pictures. Just before I was ready to leave I found out the camera didn't work. The

guy in the shop said, "I hope you have better luck in Vietnam." That was an ironic statement. Then I flew back to Vietnam.

I joined up with my company again but I don't remember exactly where we were at that time. That would have been about May 17th or 18th. The next I remember is June 6th when we started the operation called "Scotland 2-Robin South."

We were supposed to be flown into a place right on the Laotian-Vietnam border southwest of Khe Sanh, but they flew us into Laos by mistake. The only reason I know that because of our S-3 officer, MAJ Frank Breth. He stayed in and retired as a brigadier general. In the last 2 years of his life, he gave me all his pictures to record on CD and gave me all his history. We communicated. I was on that operation all summer with him. So I got all this information that he knew as a major. He had a sharp mind. He just died last year. This is his story.

They flew our whole battalion of four companies and the Alpha command, into Laos. When they set us down, he called Khe Sanh and told them to send out artillery--"Willy Peter"--white phosphorus so he could mark and find out where he was. When the shells landed he couldn't see them. We were that far away from where we were supposed to be.

We had to march back out the next day to get back into Vietnam. We then came across the Ho Chi Minh Trail. That was our mission--to destroy the Ho Chi Minh Trail and find the hospital that was supposed to be out there. We found a mud trail and the jungle was tied together on the top of the trail so you couldn't see it from the air.

They actually went up there and tied the tree branches together?

Yes. They were masters of the environment. I think they tied them together with vines. We also found a Russian made truck there. It had a machine shop in the back for repairing things. I have a picture of that truck along with an article that was in *Stars and Stripes* about it.

There was also a cave with North Vietnamese C-rations in huge cans. Our C-rations were in small cans. I don't remember what was in them. We also found a crashed helicopter just off the trail. One of the photos BGEN Breth gave me shows one of his officers posing with a helmet he took out of the wreckage. I don't think there was a body there.

Did you encounter any NVA there?

Yes. We killed several. As soon as we landed in Laos, we were setting up our line and digging in for the night when, all of a sudden, we heard screaming and yelling down to the left of us. I'd never seen a situation like that. An NVA wearing black pajamas, about 20 feet away from us and in plain view, was running full-tilt with our machine gunner firing at him with an M-60. I didn't see a weapon on him, but the next morning they found him and he was shot up pretty bad. Evidently, he was carrying two tubes of rice and ran right into the line we had just set up. He dropped the rice and turned around and ran.

So after you crossed the Ho Chi Minh Trail, I imagine you were moving east toward Khe Sanh.

Yes. We moved east after we found the helicopter, located that underground hospital, which looked like it was set up to take care of a hundred troops, and took several prisoners. We stayed in that area until the 17th of June when we were flown out to LZ Robin which was southwest of Khe Sanh.

One of the reasons we had gone on that operation, besides locating the Ho Chi Minh Trail and finding that hospital, was to find a force that had overrun Charlie Company, 1st Battalion,

4th Marines and had killed maybe 20 or 30 Marines at LZ Loon. GEN [Ray] Davis had sent our battalion out to find these NVA. We were on top of LZ Robin for 2 days. I remember they had 105s up there.

On the 19th of June helicopters came in to pick us up--CH-46 Sea Knights. Seventeen from my platoon and I got on one of them. I recall looking out one of the windows and seeing the airstrip at Khe Sanh. You could see a burned-out plane, either a C-130 or a C-123, laying out in the middle.

I had already been out in the field for 6 months and was supposed to be rotating out but they couldn't get a replacement for me. So here I was heading into Khe Sanh on the 19th of June. The helicopter was to land at a place called LZ Turkey, which was in the southwest corner of Khe Sanh. As we prepared to land, a guy drove one of those small vehicles you could carry supplies on called a mule right under where we were going to land so the pilot aborted the landing. As he circled around to make another try, one of the parachutes used to drop supplies during the siege blew up off the ground and was sucked up by the rotor blades. When the two rotor blades came together, they exploded. We were about 25 feet in the air and the helicopter dropped like a rock to the ground. The crash broke the back of the helicopter and the rear gate was jammed shut. We were trying to get out because jet fuel was pouring out. We were screaming as we tried to get out of the back of the plane. I didn't know there were side doors in the thing because I had always entered and left at the back. Just for a minute, I thought, "This is it. It's gonna catch on fire or blow up, and I'm dead. This is the last thing I'm ever gonna see." Then someone screamed to us from a side door where the gunners are. And we ran from the helicopter.

But the chopper did not catch fire.

No. It did not catch fire. Over the years, I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out why it didn't. I triaged all my men and they just had fuel burns. I went to the front of the helicopter, and the person on the left, who I later found out was the co-pilot, was dead. His name was LT [Michael D.] Helmstetler. The transmission had crushed him. His helmet and everything else was down almost to his pelvis level. The pilot, CAPT [Lufkin] Sharp, was on the right side of the helicopter. Parts of the blade had come through the Plexiglas and cut his arm and leg off. One of the other birds that was flying nearby saw what had happened. It landed and people ran up. They pulled him out and put him in that other helicopter. It then took off for D-Med in Dong Ha, but Sharp died en route. When I looked in the cockpit all I saw was this boot with part of his leg in it, and part of his arm. Later they gave both Helmstetler and Sharp a Purple Heart as if they were killed by enemy action. But it was really friendly action if you consider it was a "friendly" parachute that caused the crash.

Here I am, 6 months in the field, and now I've been in a helicopter crash. I thought, "I can't take this crap anymore." In the BAS I told one of them, "I'm about at the end of it. I don't know how much more of stuff I can take. I've been in many battles up to this point and we've lost a lot of guys." And the doctor said, "Well, buck up little soldier."

What happened then?

We spent the next 2 weeks at Khe Sanh tearing the place apart sandbag by sandbag, filling up all the bunkers, and tearing away the barbed wire. We took anything that was usable and sent it to LZ Stud, which was just outside of Calu. They had built an airstrip there to take

the place of the one at Khe Sanh. It was built for "Operation Pegasus," in which the 1st Air Cavalry came up for the relief of Khe Sanh.

That operation began on the 1st of April. And while we were taking Khe Sanh apart, the North Vietnamese were still firing at us from Coroc, a mountain in Laos where they had long-range artillery. This was a huge mountain, which has pretty much a flat face toward Khe Sanh. The back part slopes away into Laos. Their guns were on tracks and they could roll them out, fire a couple of rounds, and then roll them back into the caves. Anything we fired back from Khe Sanh would either go over the top of the mountain or slam into the front of it. The only way to get at them was to bomb them by jet. And by that time, we had nowhere to go. We had our gear on waiting for the trucks to take us to Con Thien, and we'd just destroyed all the bunkers.

So you were under fire while you were dismantling the base.

Yes. The demolition of the base was called "Operation Charlie." I guess GEN Westmoreland was saying to the enemy, "Look. We're taking this whole thing apart and we're leaving."

Anyway, we packed up anything that could be moved and sent it down to LZ Stud, which later became Vandergrift, and buried everything else. We filled up almost every bunker there and tore all the barbed wire down. Then on the 6th of July we left by convoy down Route 9. Even though we didn't have any enemy contact, the ride was very spooky. The road runs down the side of a river. On both sides of the river there is a triple canopied jungle going up maybe a thousand feet on both sides. The 11th Engineers had rebuilt the bridges. There were 23 bridges between Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh. When I went back to Vietnam in June 2003, I documented every one of them.

When we were coming down route 9, some of the bridges were pontoon bridges. Some were still out and the engineers had built the road down through the ravine and then you forded the river at that point. It didn't have much water in it. And then they built the road on the other side.

We went through Calu, the Rock Pile, Cam Lo, and on the 6th of July ended up just outside the wire at Con Thien. I had never been inside Con Thien before. We set up for that evening getting ready to start another operation. And I still hadn't got my replacement. We had a new group of corpsmen come in and I hoped my replacement was with them. And that night the NVA fired 23 120mm rockets at us. We had no real place to go except to take shelter in a bamboo thicket. I had a new corpsman with me and was training him.

The platoon in front of us began yelling, "Corpsman up!" and no one was responding. So I told my the new corpsman to head out there to see what was going on. He said, "I'm not going."

I said, "You've got to go. That's your job."

Finally he left and found that the corpsman with that unit had taken shrapnel which cut his carotid and been killed. That was on the 6th of July. The corpsman came back and started crying, which was not an unusual reaction. I'm not belittling him by any means. I'm just trying to describe what happened. He said, "I'm not doing this anymore. I'll do anything. I'll do bedpans but I can't do this."

I told him, "That is your job and you're going to be in the field for 6 months. You've gotta learn survival skills."

Then I felt bad that I didn't go with him, but I'd been in the field for almost 7 months and it wasn't my job to take care of every event. I've thought about over the years. So that was our first day at Con Thien, and then we started the operation the next day.

And you're well over your 6 months by then.

Almost 7 months and here we are again. It never quits. We kept going. I'd been wounded. I'd been in a crash. On the 30 of April and the 1st of May, we had 40 Marines killed, 125 medically evacuated. I'd seen more tragedies than I ever care to remember. And we were going forward again and under sporadic small arms fire, mortars, and artillery. And in the heat of summer with temperatures 125 degrees. Men were dropping like crazy from heat exhaustion and heat stroke. There were B-52 craters that were full of water. Most of them had scum on top of them. We'd try to take water out of there to cool off the heat casualties. We couldn't use the little canteen water we were carrying. We needed to save that for drinking. I remember the first evening, I had four or five heat casualties. The lieutenant told me that I shouldn't medevac these people out. He said, "We can't produce any more Marines. We need them."

I said that we'd keep them until the morning to see what would happen. I don't remember what happened. I can't recall whether they were medevaced out or whether they rejoined the unit. By the third day, I also succumbed to heat stroke and they had to medevac me out.

Where did they take you?

To D-Med at Dong Ha. It was just before their move to Quang Tri. They started an IV, stabilized me, and then kept me overnight. They sent me back to the field the next day.

They didn't get enough out of you yet?

I knew I was going to die in the field. I was not going to leave that place. I went back and joined my men. I think they felt like I let them down or something, that I shouldn't have been medevaced out. I don't know. By this time I was so fed up with the whole thing. I was fed up with so many people being killed. My hands had been on so many people who had died. And having blood on me and not being able to get it off. It was just everything.

I stayed in the field until the operation was over and then we headed up to a place they called "The Strip." It was a strip that had been cleared out by the engineers between Con Thien and Giolin. It was totally barren. Here we are--a battalion of Marines and tanks moving up through the "Strip" with no cover and B-52 craters all over the place. And all the time the NVA are firing artillery at us across the DMZ. You get down; you get back up; you get down; you get back up. What are we doing here?

We got back into Con Thien and then went to Dong Ha to refit. By this time our outfits were just rags. We got a bath, a hot meal, and on the 17th of July they sent us on another operation to a place called "Helicopter Valley" in the mountains about 4 miles west of Con Thien. It got its name in '66 when four helicopters crashed into each other and killed a bunch of Marines.

What was the objective?

There were NVA firing rockets at the Rock Pile from there. We were supposed to go in there and take them out. Our company got off the helicopter in a grassy area and immediately started to go for high ground on a hill. We started digging our foxholes. It was about 4 o'clock

in the afternoon and we began taking small arms and machine gun fire. Then all hell broke loose.

I had just been transferred to MAJ Breth to be his corpsman and was no longer with the 1st Platoon. I was with the Alpha Command behind my company. This was the 17th of July. I was in the rear and they started dragging people back to me. One of the first was a guy named [Michael P.] Madrid. I opened his flak jacket to see what the wound was and found that he had a bullet through his chest. A flak jacket will not stop a bullet. He had a plastic airway inside the jacket and I couldn't figure out why. Then I found out he was a corpsman and that's why he was carrying it. He was dead.

We ended up with 9 KIAs and 25 medical evacuations. We killed 38 of the enemy in that 2- or 3-hour fire fight. I started dragging the wounded off the hilltop to where we could get a helicopter in and set up a triage area. But the night set in and they didn't want to bring in any more helicopters. So I ended up that evening tending 10 or 12 men who needed evacuation. I couldn't get them out that night. The next morning we medevaced them out.

While I was there I remember seeing the parts of the helicopters from that big helicopter crash. There was jungle growing around them. I didn't know it was called "Helicopter Valley" at that time. I just remember all the helicopter parts strewn all over the place.

The next 3 or 4 days, we headed up that valley chasing the NVA. We found a weapons cache of maybe a hundred rockets. I found out later from GEN Breth what they did with them. If they didn't have fuses on them, the higher authorities wanted them brought to the rear so they could say, "Aha, look at how many rockets we've captured from the enemy." If they had fuses, they were to be blown in place because they were too dangerous to move in a helicopter. These didn't have fuses in them but Breth didn't want to wait for helicopters to come and take them out. So he called back and told them they all had fuses in them. So they blew them in place.

How long were you out there?

Until about the 22nd of July. Shortly after that, I got my orders to move out of the field to 3rd Med Battalion at Quang Tri. It had moved from Dong Ha because Dong Ha was in artillery range from the DMZ and Quang Tri was not

You must have been overjoyed.

Oh, man! They didn't have to tell me twice. I was 2 months overdue in the field. That doesn't seem like a long time but it was in the middle of the summer and the middle of the Tet Offensive. I was mentally and physically exhausted.

Anyway, I grabbed a helicopter and went to Quang Tri. They were building the hospital there--D-Med. The buildings were inflated with air and had tubes running through them. I reported into the battalion aid station for 3/9, where Dr. Behrens was. I stayed there for about 4 days while they were getting my orders together to transfer me to the hospital, which was only a quarter of a mile from the 3/9 battalion aid station.

That's where GEN Ray Davis awarded me the Purple Heart. There's a picture of him awarding me the Purple Heart which I had him sign a couple of years ago. It's on CALTRAP.COM. There's a picture of me that I submitted to them. I'm on the far left.

Anyway, they assigned me to the intensive care ward which had about 25 beds on it. It was in a steel Quonset hut. I stayed there for the last 4 months I was in Vietnam from the first part of August to December 17th. I treated the Marines as they came in from the choppers, took them to surgery or to triage. Then I brought them to ICU. We would stabilize and then medevac

them either to Danang or the USS *Sanctuary* or to Saigon depending on their condition--burns, amputations, or chest wounds. We had every conceivable wound and mangled body to deal with.

Unlike the field, I was wearing white tee-shirts and having a couple of cold beers at night. We had air conditioning most of the time. We had running water. It was really hard sometimes to see some of the men from my battalion coming in and talk with them about who was still in the field, who had been killed, who had been wounded.

How did you leave Vietnam?

I got my orders and flew to Danang. First I have to tell you about Dan Grinage and Jerry Porter. Jerry was with me on February 14th with 3rd Platoon on Valentine's Ridge. He got wounded by a grenade pretty seriously and was medevaced to Japan. On the 6th of April, Dan Grinage, who was with 2/26, was wounded up near Khe Sanh on Hill 861. And he was also medevaced to Japan. So the two of them met up in Japan. When their wounds healed, they were sent back to D-Med at Quang Tri so all three of us were together again. And all three of us got our orders to leave Vietnam at the same time. Isn't that something?

So all three of us flew down to Danang, and caught the Braniff plane to Okinawa. I don't remember arriving in Vietnam but I do remember leaving. I kept thinking, "Please don't let them rocket this plane." I was talking to God. I talked to God a lot over there.

The plane took off and everybody just started clapping. They gave us rags to wipe our faces because it was really hot in the plane until it took off.

We spent a week at Camp Hansen and I picked up my seabag, which was all moldy. All of us were on a bus to catch a flight back to Travis. While we were waiting on the bus, a sergeant got on and pointed at about six of us, including me, and told us to get off the bus. After we got off he said there were six people who were going on emergency leave that needed to get on the flight. Then he pointed at me and said, "You. Get back on." So I got to go home with Jerry and Dan.

I didn't tell you this before, but when I left Travis on my way over to Vietnam, there was a tree from which I took some leaves and kept them in my wallet while I was in Vietnam. And when I returned, I put the leaves back under that tree.

The three of us got a cab at Travis to go to the airport in San Francisco. When we got there, I got my first taste of how they felt about soldiers returning from Vietnam. I was spit on and people purposely ran into me. They looked at me with disgusted looks. After everything that I'd gone through and I come back to people who hated us.

It was just a short time from the time you were in Vietnam until you were back into what they called "The World."

Within a week I was back within a civilian population. I was so glad to be home but I was hated by the people around me. It was horrible.

I flew to Los Angeles and contacted my mom. Then I flew to my sister and brother-in-law's in Portland and spent some time there before I reported to my duty station which was San Point Naval Air Station in Seattle. I finished my Navy career there and got out in the Spring of 1970. They wanted me to ship over to Vietnam again and promised me \$10,000. There wasn't enough money in this world. There was no possible way. I never wanted to be back in a situation like that again. I don't know how people can do it.

It's been 35 years since you've been over there and I guess it's part of your life even now.

It is. I'm 100 disabled with PTSD. When I left the service I also had hypertension. I was 21 years old and had hypertension.

I went back to school and got my bachelor's degree. I was an ultrasound technician--a sonographer--for 25 years. I was making really good money and things starting going wrong. I was not able to focus at work. I didn't know what was going on. All these things that I've told you run through my mind every day. And I can't get them out of my mind. It's just like they're imprinted there.

And I was trying to find my fighting hole buddy's family, and I couldn't find it. I knew he had a son and daughter but I didn't know where they lived. I searched for Will's family for 30 years. I thought his name was Will Williams. Before the computer, it was difficult to do stuff like that.

But you eventually found the family?

Yes. And we got the Silver Star reinstated for CPL Williams, and COL Holladay and I presented it to his son at his gravesite in Newbury, Michigan.

You mentioned that you had decided to go back to Vietnam.

Yes. I wanted to return but I wanted to do it on my own terms. And I wanted to go to specific places. I wanted to go back on top of Valentine's Ridge and I wanted to go back to where Will was killed on April 30th. Those two places were very important. And I also wanted to go to where LT Holladay was wounded. But that didn't work out because they have an army compound there now.

I waited until relations with Vietnam got better. I have a friend who was in 3rd Recon Battalion. He's been back eight times and speaks Vietnamese. He knows the people over there. He set me up with a person who got me airline tickets and a bed and breakfast place in Hué and an interpreter. So I set it up to go in June of 2003. Then the SARS thing started and everyone was canceling their plane tickets to China and other Asian countries. I felt like I just had to go and complete this trip. And so I went.

I went on a 747--a Taiwanese airline--that had maybe 20 people on it. We flew into Taipei and there was nobody in the airport. Everybody had masks on. I was wearing a mask, too. I stayed at the airport for maybe 5 hours until I caught the next flight leaving for Saigon. I had never been to Saigon before.

And it had been renamed Ho Chi Minh City since then.

Right. When I flew in there, I just had this feeling of returning to Vietnam again.

What kind of feeling was it?

It was a good feeling knowing that I was going to be able to accomplish what I wanted to. I wanted to go back to these places. But there was also the feeling: "Can I handle this? Can I do this on my own?" I didn't have anybody else with me. I wanted to do it on my own.

When we flew over the coast and hit the land, I saw every conceivable type of structure almost coming right up to the airport runway. They have used every available bit of land. There still are hangers there from the Vietnam War.

This was the old Tan Son Nhut Airport?

Yes. They still use the same airport. This plane had more people on it. For everybody who came off the plane, they had to take your ear temperature and to take a history on you. If you coughed, you got thrown into an infectious disease ward. They had just been taken off the SARS epidemic list and didn't want to get another case coming in.

It seemed a little funny--and I attributed it to all the emotions of getting there. I was seeing these military people, both men and women, wearing these North Vietnamese uniforms. The last time I had seen them, this is what they looked like, with the stars on their helmets. But now they were smiling at me. It seemed surreal.

They checked my passport and there was a guy waiting for me in a cab and he took me to the old American Embassy. Then he took me to a hotel, where I stayed for one night. Then he took me back to the airport the next morning. I caught a flight to Phu Bai. It was the same old airport where I had landed before in December 1967. Then a cab took me to Huế, where I stayed at a bed and breakfast and acclimatized myself. I stayed there for 4 days and then took a cab to Dong Ha, where I got my interpreter. I had brought topographic maps and all the S-3 reports and told him exactly where I wanted to go.

I rented a guide, a car, and a driver for \$400 bucks for the week. And they'd stay with me all day long. The very first day they drove me to up to the Rock Pile. It's still there but their dynamiting it. I thought that was pretty spooky dynamiting the rock off the Rock Pile. Back then, any sound like that was incoming or outgoing.

Each day I was there I went to a specific location. I found Valentine's Ridge and hiked up to the very top where the battle was, took pictures from the top, said prayers for the 10 Marines and corpsman who were killed, and hiked back down. It killed me hiking up there. It's much steeper than I remember. But I was a kid then.

So you had some emotions being there again.

Yes. I was hoping to find old spent shells or some sign that we'd been there but found nothing. I cut a couple of trees at the top of the ridge and brought them home for walking sticks. I gave one to COL Holladay and I kept one.

On another day, we went up to Khe Sanh and I walked around taking pictures. There was some barbed wire sticking out of the ground. I cut pieces of it and brought it home. I also found some flak pads from inside the jackets that were lying around, and brought one home. I brought home a bag of dirt from there, which they took away from me at customs when I got home. I told the customs person, "I know that that bag of dirt doesn't mean a whole lot to you, but I was in Vietnam. I fought on this soil, and that soil means a lot to me and the people who were in my battalion."

And he said, "I'll autoclave it and mail it back to you."

And I said, "Yeah, sure."

Two days later it came to me by FEDEX.

When you were walking around at Khe Sanh, it probably looked a heck of a lot different than when you were there.

Yes and no. Everything from the Rock Pile to Khe Sanh to Laos is mountainous so it doesn't change at all. So all those mountains were imprinted in my brain. Going up Route 9--all the mountains on both sides, the hills, the locations. At Khe Sanh there's Hill 950 and Hill 1015, which are very prominent. When you see Khe Sanh, you can see them in the background. It's

kind of like a big nipple sticking up in the background of the pictures that you see. They were still there and I was able to have my interpreter shoot pictures of me with those in the background. And I have pictures of them taken during the war right about in that same location.

Then we went up to Lang Vei. They have one of the tanks up there that overran Lang Vei. It's on display on a big cement block and pretty well maintained. I asked if I could climb up on it and he said yes. I climbed on top of the turret and he took a picture of me. Can you imagine me asking the NVA, after overrunning the base, if I could sit on their tank? These things that were happening to me were so surreal.

How did the people seem to you? Were they friendly?

They're so friendly. The attitude of the Vietnamese people is, "That was the war. And this is now. And we move on with our lives." They live in dirt poverty but are very happy people.

And they knew that you had been there during the war?

Yes. When I was in Hué for the first 4 days, and the 4 days before I left, I had an interpreter who is the niece of the bed and breakfast people I was staying with. She teaches English in Hué. She's 22 and she had the summer off so she just stayed with me the whole time and took me wherever I wanted to go. It was very proper. Every time we went somewhere, we had to go with somebody else with us. One of the things they have is their dignity and they have to make sure that other people know that they're not doing anything they shouldn't be doing.

Anyway, she would take me around all day long and we'd go to various places--to pagodas, to king's tombs--and I'd talk with her and she'd talk with me. I brought pictures from the war and gave them to her. So they were very much aware that I had been there during the war.

But certainly there were no hard feelings on your part.

No hard feelings whatsoever. I had no hard feelings for anybody.

So having gone back to these places that you'd been, did you feel that you got some kind of closure to all of it? What your feelings having been there for that week?

It's not really a closure. My experience in Vietnam will never close. But I was able to do what I wanted to do. I wanted to go to where Will was killed, which I did. I hiked out into the rice paddies, which are still there, and filmed the whole thing. And I said a prayer for him and I brought back some dirt from there. And that's what was meaningful for me. It was my ability to go back there on my terms. If any peace can be made, that's what it was.

What an experience? I noted from your email that you are now the battalion archive officer for 3/9.

Yes. I started back in 2001. One of the guys who was our forward observer. . . They were artillery people who came into the field with us so they could call in their artillery. His name is Robert Stewart. He was with F212--2nd Battery, 12th Marines. They were the ones who were attached to 3/9. They had their 105s and 155s in the various bases like Calu, the Rock Pile, Cam Lo, Con Thien.

He was being treated for hundred percent PTSD. He had that same thing that I had. He was a successful business person--a CEO--making \$100,000 a year and he lost it. He didn't

know what was going on until he finally figured out what was happening. He wanted to get people together from Kilo Company. So we had a group of 30 of us who got together the first year. Since I had spent a lot of time on the computer doing research finding people and collecting history, they wanted me to be the archive officer and collect our history for the company at that time. And then it grew each year. And then I moved up to battalion archivist.

Is that how you occupy most of your time?

Yes. A lot of it is collecting pictures and movies taken in Vietnam from the people in our battalion, and making sure that if they have it on 8mm that I have someone put it on VHS, and then I have the capacity to put it on DVD to make sure that the movies will always be around for people to view and won't be lost.

So this is kind of therapeutic for you.

It is. It's what I enjoy doing and what I'm good at.

I can't tell you how much I appreciate you spending time with me the last 2 days and hearing your story.

I really appreciate you taking the time to hear these stories.